

## Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01

INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-15 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06 SP-02

CIEP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-03 H-02 PA-02 PRS-01

SS-15 NSC-05 AGR-10 /104 W  
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R 052059Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0267

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 2384

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BBAK, PINT, HO

SUBJ: PRESS REACTION TO UB MANAGER'S COSTA RICA TRIP

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2355

1. REFTTEL REPORTED THAT UNITED BRANDS' LOCAL MANAGER, HOUSTON LACOMBE, AND DEPARTED FROM HONDURAS TO ATTEND A COMPANY MEETING IN COSTA RICA JUNE 3. SUBSEQUENT NEWS STORIES AND EDITORIALS CONCERNING LACOMBE'S DEPARTURE HAVE CRITICIZED THE GOH FOR ALLOWING HIM TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WHILE HONDURANS INVOLVED IN THE BANANA TAX NEGOTIATIONS WITH UB ARE STILL FORBIDDEN TO TRAVEL.

2. PROCURADOR GENERAL (ATTORNEY GENERAL) SERAPIO HERNANDEZ HAS REPEATED HIS STATEMENT THAT HE DID NOT GIVE LACOMBE PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. COMPANY SPOKESMAN ROBERT TURNBULL INFORMED REPORTERS THAT LACOMBE HAD RECEIVED PERMISSION TO TRAVEL FROM THE MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT.

3. IN A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN EL CRONISTA OF JUNE 5, GERARDO MEDRANO ASKS, "ARE THERE TWO CLASSES OF JUSTICE IN HONDURAS? WHY IS THE PROCURADORIA AWAITING TO PROCEED LEGALLY AGAINST UNITED?" MEDRANO CONTRASTS THE TREATMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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OF BENNATON AND LACOMBE BY THE GOH, SAYING THAT THE FORMER, ALTHOUGH NOT CONVICTED, HAD ALREADY SPENT TIME IN JAIL WHILE THE LATTER, THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A COMPANY THAT HAS CONFESSED TO CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, WAS FREE TO LEAVE THE

COUNTRY. "IT IS EASIER," SAYS MEDRANO, "TO JAIL A  
HONDURAN THAN A GRINGO; IT IS PRETTIER TO ALLEGE CRIMINAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AGAINST A HONDURAN THAN AGAINST A FOREIGNER  
WHO REPRESENTS A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY THAT HAS COFUA  
FESSED BEING THE SECOND SUBJECT OF THE BRIBERY."  
SOWASH

UNCLASSIFIED

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 26 AUG 1999  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, MANAGERS, VISITS, MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 05 JUN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975TEGUCI02384  
**Document Source:** ADS  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** n/a  
**Film Number:** D750198-0599  
**From:** TEGUCIGALPA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Line Count:** 63  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 12 FEB 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <12 FEB 2003 by PhilliR0>; APPROVED <20 JAN 2004 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** n/a  
**TAGS:** BBAK, PINT, HO, UNITED BRANDS, (LACOMBE, HOUSTON)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006